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Aviation Week and Space Technology

November 29, 1976

SECTION: WASHINGTON ROUNDUP; Pg. 11

LENGTH: 240 words

HEADLINE: Denial Renewal

BYLINE: Washington Staff

BODY:

Defense Dept. officials again last week denied press reports that the U.S. early warning satellite in geosynchronous orbit over the Indian Ocean had been "blinded" by strong infrared radiation a year ago and that two U.S. reconnaissance satellites had been damaged or destroyed earlier this year. The strong infrared sources, 10-100 times the intensity of an intercontinental ballistic missile rocket plume, prompted Defense Dept. concern last December that the USSR might be using high-power ground-based lasers to interfere with the early warning satellite (AW&ST Dec. 8, 1975, p. 12).

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Following an AVIATION WEEK & SPACE TECHNOLOGY article on the incidents, the issue was raised during House Armed Services committee hearings on Dec. 15, and the Defense Dept. later submitted a response to be inserted in the record. The statement said in part: "Analysis of these events essentially eliminates initial concerns that lasers were being used against the satellite system. Instead the events are believed to have occurred as a result of several large fires along Soviet natural-gas pipelines [AW&ST Jan. 5, p. 18]. These events were local in nature and did not reduce the satellite system's ability to provide an early warning of ballistic missile launches." But the statement added: "Our investigation is still continuing." A Defense official now says that the investigation has been terminated.

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men. "I regret to report that other members of the CIO have written their views very little."
Administration has decided to freeze the personnel levels at all of the independent agencies until after the 1977 budget is submitted to Congress. This will make it easier for the Federal regulatory system. Some Administration officials admit that personnel levels could rise to some agencies if reform legislation is enacted, but it is unlikely that legislation would get through the Congress before late 1978 and would go into effect in 1979.

For example, officials expect that the Civil Aeronautics Board will need additional personnel to handle its responsibilities so that it can study the deregulation and eliminate some restrictions, but those additional staff would not be needed until several years from now. CAB requested some additional employees for Fiscal 1977 but was turned down by Office of Management and Budget, as were other agencies. Agencies can still appeal directly to President Ford to reexamine their requests, but success is not guaranteed because the policy decision to freeze personnel levels was approved by the President.

Excess Profits

House Banking Committee is geared to push legislation for approval on the House floor that would require the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to generate profits on government business by product line, instead of on an overall company basis. This would mean a company would not be able to losses on one program with the high profits on another program. The agency would not be required to turn over the profits to the government or to the treasury. The profits, if determined excessive by the Board, would have to be referred to the Department of Transportation or to the appropriate committee in the House or Senate if the agency or contested in court. The provision, aimed at eliminating unnecessary underestimating by major individual contractors to buy into a new major program, was approved by the Full Banking Committee last week.

Senate Commerce Committee members who proposed amendments to the Airline Deregulation and Airport Act, which would have raised funding level at \$540 million for Fiscal 1978, expect that amount will be cut substantially to reflect the committee's recommendations. Only four minor amendments were offered to the staff draft of the Senate proposal, which is expected to be introduced in the fall committee prior to the Christmas recess. No amendment was offered to the House version of the bill by the House Adair-Hollings recommendation by the staff (AWAST Nov. 24, p. 30) and supported by Sen. Howard W. Cannon (D-Tex.), chairman of the subcommittee. However, Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and James E. Pearson (R-Kans.) would recommend to the full committee that the funding level be reduced to \$500 million. "We may have to settle for less [than the \$540 million]," Sen. Cannon admitted.

Now Hear This

Some airline officials are concerned about the in-sight effect of false alarms from the new Ground Proximity Warning Systems of first-class passengers as well as flight crews (see story, p. 23). The Federal Aviation Administration requires that the G.P.W.S. be installed in all commercial aircraft by 1980. The concern is that it is so loud that passengers in the forward seats of the first class section can sometimes hear the penetrating wall: "Whoop-Whoop." -Washington Staff

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You have a fleet of propeller-driven aircraft that's served you well. Make a profit for you. A fleet that's been used, but is still in good condition with gradual increase in your travel. But those aircraft are becoming a little old. They're not as fuel efficient as capacity and the comfort that passengers have come to expect.

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Leased VFW 614s. Photo by Paul Schatz, Inc.

Anti-Satellite Laser Use Suspected

Soviets may be testing ground-based lasers to blind sensors on early warning satellites that detect ballistic missile launches

By Philip J. Klass

Washington—Pentagon officials are evaluating evidence that indicates the Russians may be experimenting with ground-based lasers intended to blind infrared sensors on U.S. early warning satellites. Three such systems, never deployed as designed, developed during the 1970s, may be used for this purpose.

If this assessment is correct, this technique also could be used to damage infrared sensors on board the early warning satellites now operating over the Indian Ocean, which monitored Soviet R-3M sites, were illuminated Oct. 18.

Another possible explanation is that the Russians are using laser technology to damage infrared sensors on communications satellites in very high altitude orbits which cannot be seen, and accurately directed, from the ground.

Infrared sensors on board the early warning satellites now operating over the Indian Ocean, which monitored Soviet R-3M sites, were illuminated Oct. 18.

Five such incidents have occurred since Oct. 18, and the strong radiation perceived to be coming from the infrared sensors on the early warning satellites did not damage the sensors. No permanent damage was experienced by the infrared sensors, so far as we know.

Soviet Degeneration

Because the Indian Ocean early warning satellite has been service for more than five years, and some sensor degradation has been observed, it is possible that other antisatellite malfunction has just occurred. The other two early warning satellites are in orbit for less than one month. Damage to the infrared sensors on the early warning satellites detected simultaneously.

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New Violations

Washington—Soviet Union, in new and additional violations of the anti-ballistic missile treaty, is concealing SS-N-8 submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

Details came yesterday from Defense Department sources.

The number of structures with covers used to avoid detection at Severomorsk Naval Base production at the Severomorsk Naval Base in Murmansk (near Novaya Zemlya) has increased.

When the Soviets completed a complex of sheds to hide the SS-N-8 missile assembly, they concealed the structure to U.S. observers at the production plant, and to conceal SS-N-8 missiles from inspection by the U.S. Strategic Arms Control Agency (SACA).

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